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Defector Had Job Tied to CIA

By Thomas B. Ross
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Harold M. Koch, a former Roman Catholic priest from Chicago who defected to the Soviet Union, once worked briefly for a Central Intelligence Agency cover organization, it has been learned.

During the summer of 1964, Koch was an employee of Radio Liberty, which broadcasts anti-Communist programs to the Soviet Union from headquarters in Munich, West Germany.

The New York Times revealed last April that Radio Liberty, ostensibly a private company, in fact provides "cover for CIA-financed organizations."

It could not be immediately determined, however, if Koch's connection with Radio Liberty adds a national security dimension to his defection. He appeared on Moscow television Tuesday and denounced the United States.

A spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said the Bureau had no file on Koch and was starting from scratch in its investigation, which will begin in Chicago.

(In Chicago, archdiocesan officials have said Koch served there as a priest from 1958 to 1963 but left when his

superiors advised him to undergo psychiatric treatment.)

State Department security officials were looking into indications that Koch may have visited Vietnam sometime in 1963 or 1964.

In applying for his current U.S. passport, Koch stated that he had traveled in Europe and the Far East during that period. But he did not specify what countries he had visited.

Koch was issued a passport Aug. 2 and left the United States Aug. 21 on a KLM Airline flight from New York to Amsterdam. He was supposed to be en route to Jidda, Saudi Arabia, to observe training methods at an English-language school and eventually teach there.

Koch was traveling with an 11-man team of instructors under contract with the Institute of Modern Languages Inc., a company based here.

Koch left the group in Amsterdam, telling his colleagues that he wanted to stop over in Paris to talk to a Sorbonne professor with whom he was working on a doctoral thesis.

When Koch failed to appear on the job in Saudi Arabia on Aug. 25, the Institute started a search for him.

Marcel X. Rocca, head of the Institute, said that KLM reported Koch had completed

the flight to Paris but that the Paris police were unable to locate him or provide any information about his movements.

Rocca said Koch approached a representative of the Institute at a convention of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs in Chicago last May.

Shortly thereafter, Rocca said, Koch submitted an application for an overseas job, listing the fact that he was a graduate of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill.

Rocca said Koch, who speaks good Russian, listed employment with Radio Liberty on the application, which proved accurate when subjected to a normal check of professional experience and security.

The Institute was well aware that Koch was a priest who had left his duties, Rocca said, but did not raise the issue with him.

"It was a bit unusual," Rocca remarked, "but it didn't shock me. That sort of thing is not so rare in our time."

The Institute judged Koch to be well-qualified for a teaching job and brought him to Washington last month for a two-week briefing before overseas assignment.

Rocca said his companions found Koch "very personable

and affable, intelligent and dedicated."

"He never talked politics," Rocca added.

In Saudi Arabia he was to have given language training to Arabians employed by the Raytheon Corp. in the installation of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles.

Rocca complained that Koch owes the Institute about \$2000 for travel expenses and advance pay.